

Dear Caregivers,

We are very excited you want to take this trip with us in exploring a Montessori-styled playgroup. Here are some thoughts/guidelines and information we hope will help serve you and your child in this fun adventure.

Maria Montessori lived from 1870 to 1952. She was the first female Doctor of Medicine in Italy. Through her work with children, she developed her unique educational method, known as the Montessori Method. This system of education is both a philosophy of child development and a rationale for guiding such growth. It is based on the child's developmental needs for **freedom within limits**, as well as a carefully **prepared environment**, which guarantees exposure to materials and experiences.

The main premises of Montessori education are:

- Children are to be respected as individuals.
- Children possess a sensitivity and intellectual ability to absorb information from their environments that differ from the adult both in quality and capacity.
- The most important years of a child's growth are the first six years of life when unconscious learning is gradually brought to the conscious level.

Children have a deep love and need for purposeful work. They work, however, not as an adult for completion of a job, but the sake of an activity itself. It is this activity, which enables them to accomplish their most important goal: the development of them.

Your child's work is a source of pride and accomplishment. Many times the things that your child has done are not "take home" work. It is also not meant to be the work of the caregiver; it is meant to be the work of the child. This does not diminish the importance or pride your child feels about his/her work. Talk to your child and understand that what may seem simple or unimportant to an adult may represent huge work and accomplishment to your child.

Things to keep in mind in the Montessori Method:

- The child is not required to share their work or space with another child
- The child is free to use materials as long as he/she uses it with respect
- The child has the right to choose any materials
- The child NEEDS to work independently

The way we see our playgroup running:

From 10-11:30 the children can choose to be involved in unguided play such as building, dress-up or sensory exploration. There will also be an art project (Mondays) or science experiment (Wednesdays) they can choose to participate in. Montessori-styled learning trays will be set up and available, with helpful instructions for the caregiver, that targets specific areas such as gross or fine motor skills. The children may be content to play with our array of toys and puzzles (including a large amount from Melissa and Doug) alone or with others. At other times, the children may simply enjoy the dedicated time they get to spend one on one with their parent.

At 11:30, the children will be involved in the cleaning and care of the environment. Following that will be some yoga and music to end the session.

Whenever possible, we will be using natural elements to encourage understanding and respect of the world we live in. The process over the outcome is valued. And the process may be messy. We'll always strive to use "washable" materials, consider not wearing favorite clothes to our playgroups.

Religion/holiday celebrations:

The St. Paul's Montessori-styled playgroup is meant to respect and welcome all faiths but with no particular religious bias. Any discussion of religious matters will be purely from an educational point of view, usually stemming from different holiday celebrations. Holidays are celebrated from a cultural point of view. If your child comes from a background that has a different holiday celebration, please let us know so your child can share the event with the class. Some holidays celebrated are Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Here are some tips for bringing Montessori principles into your home:

- Make things accessible to your young child:
 - Provide low shelves or drawers for clothing
 - Keep a small step stool in the bathroom and kitchen so your child can reach the sink
 - Arrange toys and games on low open shelves with a particular place for each. Sort smaller items into trays or baskets by category, such as puzzles, art supplies and blocks
 - Put healthy snacks and foods on a low pantry shelf so your child can help him/herself
 - Pour drinks into small, manageable pitchers placed on a low refrigerator shelf. Keep cups within your child's reach – along with a sponge to clean up spills
- Allow your child to help at home:
 - Wash tables
 - Putting their plates/bowls/cups in the sink when finished
 - Emptying parts of the dishwasher
 - Peel vegetables
 - Fold their clothes
 - Match their socks
 - Care for pets
- Promote concentration
 - Observe what sparks his/her interest
 - Set up the means and materials to explore it
 - Let him/her work without interruption
- Nurture Inner Motivation
 - Allow children to feel intrinsic value in their work which makes them most willing to apply themselves
 - Try to refrain from using traditional awards (gold stars, merit-based privileges)
 - Give praise sparingly – saved to acknowledge a child's effort, rather than the outcome of the work
 - Expressing encouragement and appreciation for your child's efforts, helps nurture an inner motivation, based on his/her own pride and pleasure, that will have lasting and meaningful effects

We hope you found the information helpful and informative. Our end goal is to promote the joy of learning while making it a fun environment for you and your child. We look forward to taking this adventure together!

St. Paul's Playgroup

Information and Liability Release:

Child(ren)'s name and birthdate _____

Parent name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

Email address as associated with facebook to join our facebook group:

In case of emergency contact: _____

Telephone: (____) _____ Relationship: _____

Allergies or any additional information to know: _____

_____ Monday (art only) One child, one day a week – \$50

_____ Wednesday (science only) One child, two days a week – \$75

_____ Monday and Wednesday Two children, one day a week – \$75

Two children, two days a week – \$100

I, the undersigned, understand that my participation and the participation of my family in any playgroup activities are completely voluntary, and hereby give permission for myself and my family to join in those activities or programs. My family shall hold harmless St. Paul's Episcopal Church, any volunteers or representatives, paid or unpaid, and/or the providers of any activity or program location and/or materials from any liability and/or responsibility for any accident, illness or injury that occurs during or as a result of any function or program. I accept that the final responsibility for my safety and that of my family rests with me.

Date

Signature